

By Claudia Ricci

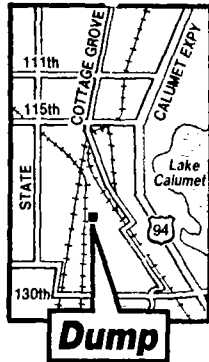
6/17 Times

A landfill operator with a history of illegally dumping hazardous chemicals in the Lake Calumet area now runs one of three waste disposal sites in Chicago allowed to accept industrial wastes, the Sun-Times has learned.

Steven Martell, president of Paxton Landfill Corp., 12201 S. Oglesby, previously operated three South Side dumpsites that state and local agencies forced him to close because they accepted toxic chemicals without permits to do so.

Hazardous conditions at one of Martell's former dumpsites, U. S. Scrap Corp., 119th and Cottage Grove, were made public Friday and Saturday by the Metropolitan Sanitary District when inspectors disclosed evidence of chemicals seeping through soil covering two lagoons on the site.

At least 1 million gallons of chemicals is



believed to be buried in the lagoons and more than 100,000 gallons of chemicals was discovered in two grain silos.

Sanitary District investigators are trying to find out whether Martell, who declared bankruptcy after U.S. Scrap Corp. was sued in 1976, still owns the site at 119th and Cottage Grove. Penn Central R.R. owns the land on which one of the silos is located.

Stanley Whitebloom, chief enforcement officer for the Sanitary District, said an investigation is under way to determine who was responsible for the wastes discovered last week.

A Sun-Times review of government records and court files show Martell is well known not only to the Sanitary District but also to the state and federal Environmental Protection agencies and to city environmental inspectors.

Records of his nine-year history of chemical waste disposal show:

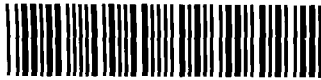
- He operated U.S. Scrap Corp. from 1972 until 1976, when the Sanitary District won a Circuit Court order shutting it down. Investigators had repeatedly cited his firm for discharging runoff with high levels of metals.

Turn to Page 8

Chicago Sun-Times, Tuesday, June 17, 1980

Illegal dumper now runs waste site in Chicago

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



396474

Continued from Page 1

oils and other compounds. The lagoons also were known to catch fire and overflow.

Martell signed a consent decree in August, 1976, requiring him to clean up the site. He was to remove oil-drenched soil and other debris, as well as remove thousands of gallons of chemicals from the former grain silos. An October, 1976, Sanitary District inspection showed the silos had been pumped out and a substantial amount of an oily liquid had been removed from a trench.

- In December, 1976, a Sanitary District helicopter patrol spotted another suspicious Martell operation involving several tank trucks parked at 110th Pl. and Champlain. Martell said he owned the tank trucks and was leasing the property for storage until liquid wastes could be transferred to Indiana for disposal.

- In October, 1978, both state and Sanitary District investigators said they found Martell doing business as U.S. Drum Disposal Corp., 135th and Hoxie. Investigators suspected he was using a disguised garbage truck to transport liquid wastes to sanitary landfills.

During a Sanitary District hearing, Martell denied illegally dumping the liquids, but said he would clean up the Hoxie site by January and move his operations to a better facility at 2400 E. 119th. However, in February, Sanitary District investigators found hundreds of empty drums still at the site and noted that the property had not been cleaned or graded.

- In March 1979, Martell and his firm, U.S. Drum Disposal Corp., were charged in a suit filed by the Illinois attorney general's office with taking in hazardous chemicals without

permits at the new site on 119th St. State Environmental Protection Agency inspectors found thousands of drums containing paint resins, solvents and other chemical at the 119th St. site. Workers were seen dumping contents of the drums into shallow lagoons, according to Assistant Atty. Gen. Anne Markey.

Martell was not fined but was ordered to label and remove approximately 4,000 drums containing paint resins, solvents and other chemicals. About 100 drums still remain at the site, which Martell claimed he inherited from a previous operator and is not responsible for.

- In October, 1979, owners of Alburn Incinerator, 2200 E. 119th, terminated their contract with Martell to operate that site because "we weren't satisfied with his methods of operation," said Alburn President Julia Hagerty.

Hagerty, an attorney, said Martell, then doing business as Chemical Incineration Inc., was to turn over 50 percent of the plant income to Alburn, but "he wound up taking 100 percent."

Hagerty said Martell claimed the money went into repairs and plant improvements.

Several attempts by the Sun-Times to reach Martell for comment were unsuccessful.

Since June, 1979, Martell has been operating the Paxton site under permits granted by the city and state.

The Sanitary District's Whitebloom and Thomas Cavanaugh, who heads the state EPA land permit section, said there is nothing in the law that provides for considering an applicant's background or past experience when weighing a permit application.